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INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7681  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4659  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000806

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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (05/15): BLEAK PALESTINIAN  
ANALYSES OF LAST 61 YEARS

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Main Stories:  
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All dailies lead with coverage of Palestinian Authority President Abbas' speech on May 14 on the occasion of the 61st anniversary of the Nakba [catastrophe]. President Abbas reiterated demands for an end to the Israeli occupation, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and the return of refugees based on the Arab Peace Initiative. Abbas stressed that the demands are the minimum requirements for peace. The dailies also report that several public and official Nakba events took place in the West Bank and Gaza on May 14. In its lead photo, Al-Quds shows Palestinian children at Ayn Al-Hilwah refugee camp in Lebanon wearing traditional Palestinian costumes while reenacting, "the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948."

All dailies run front page coverage of Palestinian Authority President Abbas' visit to Syria on May 14. Abbas met with Syrian President Asad and discussed bilateral relations, the peace process, and Palestinian unity talks and issues' related to the new Israeli government. The papers quote PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat noting that Asad supports the Palestinian cause and believes in the importance of a comprehensive, regional peace. Palestinian factions in Syria told press that they will not meet with Abbas because they oppose, "his illegal and illegitimate acts [formation of Palestinian Authority government]," according to coverage.

Al-Ayyam runs front page wire coverage about CIA Director Panetta conducting discrete talks with Israeli officials who assured him that Israel will not carry out a surprise attack on Iran.

Al-Quds runs front page coverage citing Israeli daily Haaretz about continued Israeli expansion of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement near Jerusalem, "despite U.S. opposition to expanding the settlement,

particularly the E1 block." The story notes that expansion would separate the West Bank from Jerusalem and, "eliminate chances of any peace settlement." Al-Quds front pages a map published by Haaretz showing expansion plans for the settlement area. In related news, an Al-Ayyam inside page reports that twenty armed Israeli settlers blocked the main Madama road south of Nablus on May 14, in an attempt to deny Palestinians' access to the city.

Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida run front page coverage of the Pope's visit to Nazareth on May 14, where he said mass for more than 40,000 participants and called for peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christian residents of Nazareth. The Pope urged Christians in the city not to immigrate. The Pope also met with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu who is quoted stating, "I asked the Pope to condemn the Iranian nuclear threat whose aim is to destroy Israel." According to coverage, Israel rejected the Pope's request to allow the visit of 500 priests from Arab countries to holy sites in the Palestinian Territories.

All front pages report that Palestinian Authority (PA) Premier Fayyad confirmed that the new PA government will not hinder Palestinian national dialogue. Fayyad noted that a care-taker government is needed to ensure, "the daily needs of the people" until a unity government can be formed. The statements were made during a ceremony inaugurating infra-structure projects in Tulkarim Governorate on May 14.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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1) Al-Quds independent daily runs an editorial under the title,

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"May 15 - 61 years later" (05/15): "From May 15, 1948 to May 15, 2009 Palestinians have experienced a long road of misery and catastrophe. Thousands have been expelled; thousands have been killed, injured or imprisoned... International politics have served Israeli interests while international powers have supported Israel economically and politically. In parallel to their endless support of Israel, they have asked the powerless Palestinians to negotiate with Israel ...61 years have passed and new generations of refugees have been created, despite international resolutions about their right of return. We find that Israel denies all responsibility for this catastrophe and even worse, continues to accept thousands of new Jewish immigrants onto Palestinian lands!"

2) Maha Al-Masri opines in Al-Quds independent daily under the tile, "After 61 years, has Israel succeeded to annul the right of return?" (05/15): "Because Israeli ideology encourages continuous [settlement] expansion, we find that Israel continues to refuse to recognize Palestinian refugee's right of return since Israel believes that the return of refugees would pose a threat to the Jewish state... this refusal shows that Israel is a racist country that wants only to preserve the Jewish race."

WALLES